

Remarks

The Applicants respectfully request consideration of the subject application upon entry of this Preliminary Amendment.

Upon entry of this preliminary amendment, the present application will have claims 1-23 pending and under consideration. The Applicants hereby notify the Examiner that claims 21-23 have been copied from U.S. Patent Application Number 10/127,201, filed April 19, 2002, as published in U.S. Publication Number 2003/0083685 A1 on May 1, 2003 (hereinafter referred to as the “‘685 Publication”). Claims 21-23 in the present application respectively correspond to claims 28-30 from the ‘685 publication. It should be noted that claims 21-23 have been filed within one (1) year of the publication date of the ‘685 Publication, and as a result, the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §135(b)(2) have been satisfied. A declaration of interference is solicited to resolve the apparent conflict between the Applicants claimed invention and the claims of the ‘685 publication.

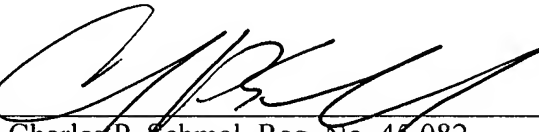
The Applicants wish to note that the present application claims priority to at least May 19, 1996, which is more than one year earlier than the April 19, 2002 filing date of the ‘685 Publication. In particular, the present application is a continuation of Application Serial No. 09/887,574 filed June 21, 2001, which is a continuation of Application Serial No. 09/552,243 filed April 19, 2000, now U.S. Patent No. 6,352,514, which is a continuation of Application Serial No. 09/298,386 filed April 23, 1999, now U.S. Patent No. 6,099,484, which is a continuation of Application Serial No. 08/858,042 filed May 16, 1997, now U.S. Patent No. 5,951,492, which claims benefit of provisional Application Serial Nos. 60/017,133 filed May 19, 1996; 60/019,918 filed June 14, 1996; 60/023,658 filed August 1, 1996; 60/025,340 filed September 3, 1996; 60/064,856 filed September 17, 1996; 60/092,121 filed September 16, 1996

and 60/044,406 filed October 8, 1996. It also should be noted that the '492 patent issued on September 14, 1999, which is more than one year prior to the filing date of the '685 Publication.

It is submitted that all of the features recited in claims 21-23 are supported in the present application (see FIGs. 2-4 for example) as originally filed as well as in the parent and provisional applications to which it claims priority.

In view of this Preliminary Amendment, consideration of the present application, as amended, is respectfully requested. If after reviewing this amendment the Examiner feels that any issues remain which must be resolved, the Examiner is invited to contact the applicants' undersigned representative by telephone to resolve such issues.

Respectfully Submitted,

By 
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